

Dr. Barbara Bolin, Director

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TO: Michigan Works! Agency Directors

FROM: Barbara J. Tornholm, Director  
Adult Education and Spanish Speaking Affairs

SUBJECT: Partnership for Adult Learning (PAL) Policy Issuance 03-00:

This policy provides definitions for performance data elements for Michigan Works! Agencies (MWAs) to use for the purpose of paying providers of adult education services under the Partnership for Adult Learning (PAL), Section 108 of the State School Aid Act. This policy also comments on whether, and the extent to which, these data elements may overlap with performance measures that program operators must provide to the MAERS.

#### Purpose of National Reporting System (NRS) and MAERS

For first year design and implementation of MAERS, meeting the minimum requirements of the NRS has been the focus. The NRS was developed in response to the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title II – Adult Education and Family Literacy Act. To standardize the NRS reporting data comparable descriptions of program activity, the NRS must be applied to all state activities required for federal match and maintenance of effort requirements (including PAL), as well as the federally funded programs. To achieve this, MAERS is being used for Section 107 of the State School Aid Act, the Michigan Department of Corrections, PAL and other programs. Each adult education funded program has unique data requirements related to payments.

#### Data Collection in Regards to Partnership for Adult Learning (PAL)

##### I. Performance Data Elements for Partnership for Adult Learning (PAL) Payments

Section 108 of the State School Aid Act authorizing PAL identifies four “payment points” as factors for reimbursing service providers, including an enrollment factor for first-time providers and performance standards for all service providers. Further, Section 108 authorizes MDCD to approve these measures, the methods by which data are collected,

and the performance standards that providers must meet in order to receive payment for their services. MDCD has delegated to the MWAs the weighting (percent allocation) of the three factors for payments to service providers. First time providers earn 50% of their funds based on enrollments for the first year. The following are the MDCD definitions of the PAL performance measures or payment points:

A. Enrollment

Section 108 of the State School Aid Act states that a student is enrolled when s/he completes a department-approved assessment test and an adult learner plan. In the MAERS, MDCD has specified the approved assessments that must be used. Each MWA may determine the type of adult learner plan it wishes to use to meet that portion of the enrollment definition.

B. Pre- and Post-Test

1. The measure is met when a student completes a department-approved assessment both before and after a period of instruction. Interim tests before completion of a course but after a period of instruction may be considered a post-test.
2. For GED, the pre- and post-test measure is the proportion of the 5 subject matter tests required for a GED certificate that have been passed (practice or actual tests).
3. For High School Diploma, the pre- and post-test measure is the proportion of credits required for a diploma that have been earned and credited.
4. In the case of the special federal category of Work-Based Project Learner, MAERS does not allow the recording of pre- or post-test assessment scores. The NRS indicates work-based project learners are not counted for educational gain measures and are not assigned an educational functioning level (EFL). To align MAERS/NRS reporting with Section 108 requirements for pre- and post-test data for payment points, local programs can use the category "Workplace Literacy Program" as MAERS/NRS does collect pre- and post-test assessment data for such programs.

C. Improvement Towards Goal

The NRS definition of an educational gain applies. Measurement of an educational gain is defined as a student who advances from one EFL to a higher EFL.

D. Achievement of Terminal Goal

Generally, achieving a terminal goal equates to the student achieving their self-identified outcome goal (primary goal). There is an exception for PAL funded

programs, in that the “Other” category cannot be selected as a goal as it is not measurable.

In addition, the NRS does not define the measure for the following terminal goals: improve basic literacy and improve English proficiency. Therefore, the MDCD has identified the measure for goal achievement for these categories as: “Advancing two EFLs. This is the required measure for Section 107 and the federally-funded programs.”

**Due to the late dissemination of this policy, locally determined goal definitions in lieu of the advancement of two EFLs for the goals “improve basic literacy” and “improve English proficiency” will be accepted for the current fiscal year ONLY (October 1, 2000 to September 30, 2001). Rationale justifying the definition must be locally documented.**

### III. Relationship Between Payment Points and MAERS Performance Data.

MAERS was designed as a reporting system and not as a payment factor data collection system. MWAs may specify in local contracts their own payment criteria so long as these are consistent with the requirements of Section 108 of the State School Aid Act. At the same time, the MWAs must report educational gains and outcome goal achievements in the categories prescribed by MAERS. MWAs may choose to use MAERS data to document and determine whether payments should be made based on the provider’s MAERS performance. The MDCD has determined that the extent of the difference between the PAL payment criteria and MAERS reporting data is up to the MWA. Reasonable documentation justifying any difference between the data used for the PAL payments and the NRS/MAERS data for their providers shall be retained locally, and must be submitted along with a fiscal expenditure report due November 15, 2001. For example, an explanatory internal memorandum justifying the different levels of performance can meet this requirement. An explanation of performance levels being used is not needed in all individual files.

### IV. NRS Follow-Up Requirements

To meet the NRS’ extensive follow-up requirements on goal-related outcomes, the MDCD will accept the data currently being entered into MAERS for the Program Year 2000-2001. However, MDCD plans to electronically match students with employment-related goals to the Unemployment Insurance Wage Record information, which will be used only for federal reporting purposes.

Questions or concerns regarding this policy issuance and recommendations for future clarifications should be forwarded to Sandy Thelen at 517-373-3395 or at [thelensj@state.mi.us](mailto:thelensj@state.mi.us).